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ABSTRACT

In the interests of improving the educational success of limited English proficient (LEP) students, this analysis outlines a set of recommendations that include principles and ideal practices to be used in educational programs for LEP students. Specifically, the recommendations provide guidance for improving and making more uniform procedures for screening and assessing LEP students for the purpose of classifications, placement, and reclassification. In addition, the report contains recommendations concerning state-level data collection efforts focused on LEP students. This report discusses issues surrounding the assessment of LEP students and recommendations for assessment at key decision-making points; procedures for data-collection; a service delivery model consistent with the recommendations outlined in the report; and policy recommendations, with federal, state, and local implications. The text contains one flowchart. An appendix lists members of the LEP Student Data Project Advisory Committee. Four references are included. (JB)

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Recommendations for

Improving the Assessment

and Monitoring of Students with

LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

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CONTENT

3 Acknowledgements

4 Preface

5 **Introduction**

6 **Issues Related to Identification and Assessment**

6 Definition of Language Proficiency

7 Recommendations

8 Screening Procedures

9 Assessment for Classification

10 Assessment for Placement

11 Assessment for Monitoring Academic Success and Reclassification

13 **Collection of Data for Monitoring Students' Success**

13 Benefits of a Comprehensive Date Base

14 Recommendations

15 **Model for Assessment and Service Delivery to Students with Limited English Proficiency**

16 **Policy Implications at the Federal and State Levels**

16 References

17 Appendix A

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COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS (CCSSO)

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nationwide non-profit organization of the 57 public officials who head departments of public education in the fifty states, five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Defense Dependent Schools. It has functioned as an independent national council since 1927 and has maintained a Washington office since 1948. CCSSO seeks its members' consensus on major education issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, to federal agencies, to Congress, and to the public. Through its structure of committees and task forces, the Council responds to a broad range of concerns about education and provides leadership on major education issues.

Because the Council represents each state's chief education administrator, it has access to the educational and governmental establishment in each state and to the national influence that accompanies this unique position. CCSSO forms coalitions with many other education organizations and is able to provide leadership for a variety of policy concerns that affect elementary and secondary education. Thus, CCSSO members are able to act cooperatively on matters vital to the education of America's young people.

The State Education Assessment Center was established by CCSSO to improve the information base on education in the United States, especially from a state perspective. The Center works to improve the breadth, quality, and comparability of data on education, including state-by-state achievement data, data on dropouts, indicators of quality in areas such as math and science, and performance assessment of teachers and students. In collaboration with state education agencies (SEAs), the federal government, and national and international organizations, the Center contributes to a set of useful and valid indicators of educational quality.

The CCSSO Resource Center on Educational Equity provides services designed to achieve equity and high quality education for minorities, women and girls, and for the disabled, limited English proficient, and low-income students. The Center is responsible for managing and staffing a variety of CCSSO leadership initiatives to assure education success for all children and youth, especially those placed at risk of school failure.

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Project activities were administered by Barbara Clements, Co-director, State Education Assessment Center; Julia Lara, Co-director, Resource Center on Educational Equity; and Oona Cheung, Project Associate. This report was authored by the project staff: Barbara Clements, Julia Lara and Oona Cheung. Ramsay Selden, Director of the Assessment Center and Cynthia Brown, Director of the Resource Center, provided general advice and direction to the project.

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PREFACE

For the past five years the priority of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) has been to improve the educational success of all students. Central to this effort is a special focus on students at risk of school failure, including those with limited English proficiency. For limited English proficient (LEP) students success in school hinges upon gaining access to effective second-language learning opportunities, and to a full educational program.

In support of its commitment to expand educational opportunities to limited English proficient students, CCSSO has undertaken several program initiatives to help chief state school officers and their state education agency staffs strengthen their leadership roles in this area. In December 1986, CCSSO conducted a project designed to promote intra-departmental collaborative efforts to improve coordination of services to LEP students. A number of activities were conducted under this project including surveys, site visits and training meetings of state education agency staff. Results of that project were documented in a report titled, *School Success for Limited English Proficient Students: The Challenge and the State Response.*

More recently, and with support from the Andrew Mellon Foundation, the Council initiated a project to encourage improvements in the assessment of LEP students and in state education agency collection, reporting and utilization of data on LEP students' educational status and progress. The first activity of this project was to gather information about relevant state education agency practices. The outcome of this effort was a report titled, *Summary of State Practices Concerning the Assessment of and Data Collection about Limited English Proficient (LEP) Students.*

In addition, the Council convened an Advisory Committee whose mission was to develop broad recommendations concerning assessment of and data collection about LEP students. This activity was crucial to the overall goal of this project. The Advisory Committee consisted of state education agency staff, officials from various offices in the U.S. Department of Education, experts in the education of LEP students, and representatives of advocacy groups. They met on two occasions to discuss issues associated with assessment of LEP students and the collection of information about educational progress of these students. The recommendations contained in this document are the result of the Committee's deliberations. These recommendations were formally adopted by the Council of Chief State School Officers at its November, 1991 Annual Meeting.

INTRODUCTION

For students whose native language is other than English, educational success is an increasing challenge across the United States. In large school districts, these students, together with students of ethnic minorities, already comprise 40 percent of the school population (Madrid, 1988). School systems are responding to the enrollment increases by adopting year-round schedules, developing orientation programs and increasing the number of teachers who have studied second-language teaching methods. Not all school systems, however, are able to respond effectively to the multiple needs of these students.

One of the most difficult issues facing state and national educational policy analysts is having reliable information about the numbers of students in need of language-support services. Though all states have established procedures for the identification of these students, the operational definition of a student with limited English proficiency varies across and within states.

In many states, local education agencies (LEAs) have the option of choosing the assessment methods (tests, observations and interviews) and the cutoff points on an English-language proficiency test which determine whether or not a student is placed in a language-assistance program. As a result, a student who is identified as limited English proficient (LEP) in one state or district might not meet another state or district's criteria for identification and, hence, might not have access to special language-assistance programs. Reliable estimates are also necessary at the national level: disbursement of federal funds are based on estimates of the distribution of special needs students among state and local education jurisdictions.

Other important issues include: How effective are the instructional strategies used in programs that serve these students? What is the educational condition of these students classified by the school system as "limited English proficient" students? These latter issues focus on the quality and availability of information about students with limited English proficeney.

In many states, data collected about LEP students do not provide enough information to adequately assess academic standing of students while enrolled in language-support programs, and after students have been placed in English-only classes. For example, only 30 states collect figures on the number of students retained in grade while in language-assistance programs; 16 states collect figures on LEP students placed below grade level and 32 states collect information on numbers of LEP students who dropped out of school while in language-assistance programs. Fewer than 10 states have a mechanism for monitoring the academic status of LEP students after they are placed in English-only classes. Inadequate, inconsistent information about factors (such as retention rates, drop-out rates, and special education referrals) that bear on the education of these students thwart state and local efforts to strengthen programs and make judgments about the effectiveness of instruction at the local level.

The following report outlines a set of recommendations that include principles and ideal practices to be used in educational programs for students with limited English proficiency. Specifically, the recommendations provide guidance for improving and making more uniform procedures for screening and assessing LEP students for the purpose of classifications, placement and reclassification. In addition, the report contains recommendations concerning state-level data-collection efforts focused on LEP students. The introduction of this report is followed by four sections: Section II describes issues surrounding the assessment of LEP students and includes recommendations for assessment at key decision-making point; Section III recommends procedures for data-collection; and Section IV describes and presents a diagram of a service delivery model consistent with the recommendations outlined in the report; Section V provides policy recommendation, with federal, state and local implications.

5

Issues Related to Identification and Assessment

An important first step in developing recommendations regarding the identification and assessment of LEP students is determining the key questions that need to be answered. The following are some important questions and issues:

- What are appropriate, contemporary definitions of English language proficiency and limited English proficiency? How do these definitions account for different student backgrounds and levels of ability in languages?
- Given these concepts, what are the appropriate steps or procedures for determining language proficiency and limited English proficiency? Is more than one set of procedures/criteria for determining language proficiency implied? What criteria should be used for evaluating assessment procedures?
- What criteria should be used by schools to determine the identification, placement and reclassification of LEP students?
- How many children now are identified as limited English proficient, and what percentage of them is being served by the schools? To what extent is the school context (supply of teachers, funds) mitigating toward inclusiveness or exclusiveness in identifying children?
- What data are needed to monitor students' progress while they are in both subject-matter instruction and language-assistance programs—and after they leave the programs?

These issues and questions relate both to assessment and data-collection requirements during the phases of identifying, determining placement and monitoring progress of LEP students. These phases include:

1. Screening to identify any student who may be eligible for language-assistance services (typically using a home-language survey).
2. Classification assessment to determine who needs language-assistance services.
3. Placement assessment to determine which services a student needs.
4. Assessment to monitor academic progress and linguistic development in language-assistance programs and to determine changes in types of language assistance or exit from language-assistance programs.
5. Monitoring the progress of LEP students in mainstream programs.

The project's recommendations focused on these five phases. However, a more fundamental issue, namely what is meant by *language proficiency*, required agreement prior to addressing the individual phases.

Definition of Language Proficiency

The major goal of language-assistance programs is to help students from a language background other than English develop sufficient English proficiency skills to allow them to succeed in English-only classes. Simultaneously, such programs should ensure that these students continue to learn and expand their knowledge of new content and therefore do not fall behind their peers whose native language is English. Another important goal of these programs is to promote the development of proficiency in the native, non-English language. This goal, however, is less frequently pursued. As students age, their language proficiency—in English or another language—must grow in complexity if they are to learn the increasingly complex curriculum content.

A crucial step in meeting the needs of language-minority students (children from language backgrounds other then English) is the identification of those students who need language-assistance services. The Bilingual Education Act, reauthorized in 1988 (P.L. 100-297), describes a limited-English-proficient (LEP) student as one who:

(a) meets one or more of the following conditions:

- the student was born outside of the United States or whose native language is not English;
- the student comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; or
- the student is American Indian or Alaskan Native and comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on his/her level of English language proficiency; and

(b) has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language to deny him or her the opportunity to learn successfully in English-only classrooms.

In determining language proficiency, school personnel must assess all four language skills (speaking, reading, writing and understanding/listening) because these skills affect the appropriate placement of children in learning environments. A student can be competent in one or more of these skills, but not in all. Students from some language backgrounds may

have been exposed to reading and writing in English, but have little experience in listening to and speaking English. On the other hand, some students may have adequate oral communication skills, but be unable to read and write English. A further complication is that a student's competence in English in each of the four language skill areas is related to the student's familiarity with the topics of communication and social circumstances of communication.

In addition, the operational definition of language proficiency must address proficiencies in both the native, non-English, language and the English language. Language-minority children may or may not be proficient in their native languages. Their ability to communicate in their native language may have a major impact on their ability to learn English and their ability to learn new content in either language. Research evidence supports the notion that proficiency in the native language contributes not only to the acquisition of a second language, but also to cognitive flexibility and improved thinking skills (Hakuta, 1986). On the other hand, if students lack proficiency in the first language, they may find it more difficult to master a second language.

Educators often find it difficult to adequately assess an LEP student's achievement level in English because academic performance may be confounded with test-taking skills or English-language proficiency. In other words, a student's performance on a test written in English may be affected by his or her level of English proficiency, which may affect the amount of time it takes to finish the test or the ability to understand what is being asked on the test.

To assist in the development of recommendations on assessment and data collection, the Advisory Committee defined two concepts related to English-language proficiency. It was assumed that proficiency is related to linguistic performance at various levels and in various situations. The definitions of these concepts play a crucial role in selecting procedures that ensure comparable classifications and assignments of students from site to site. The two definitions related to English proficiency follow.

A fully English proficient (FEP) student is able to use English to ask questions, to understand teachers and reading materials, to test ideas, and to challenge what is being asked in the classroom. Four language skills contribute to proficiency, as follows:

Reading—the ability to comprehend and interpret text at the age- and grade-appropriate level.

Listening—the ability to understand the language of the teacher and instruction, comprehend and extract information, and follow the instructional discourse through which teachers provide information.

Writing—the ability to produce written text with content and format fulfilling classroom assignments at the age- and grade-appropriate level.

Speaking—the ability to use oral language appropriately and effectively in learning activities (such as peer tutoring, collaborative learning activities, and question/answer sessions) within the classroom and in social interactions within the school.

A limited English proficient (LEP) student has a language background other than English, and his or her proficiency in English is such that the probability of the student's academic success in an English-only classroom is below that of an academically successful peer with an English-language background.

Recommendations

The Advisory Committee developed the following recommendations reflecting a model for (1) the identification of LEP students and their placement in appropriate learning experiences and (2) the assessment and monitoring of success of these children—both while they are receiving language-assistance services and after they are no longer receiving these services. The model includes several distinct, but interrelated steps:

- **Screening** for a native language background other than English.
- **Assessment for classification** of English proficiency, with attention to evidence of limited English-language skills that restrict a student's successful participation in English-only classes.
- **Assessment for placement** into the appropriate learning experiences and language-assistance programs.
- **Assessment for monitoring student's academic progress and for making changes** in the nature of language-assistance services received (reclassification).
- **Collection of data for monitoring students' success** and evaluating program effectiveness while students are in language-assistance programs and after they leave the programs.

Each of these areas is discussed separately. However, the process of identifying and placing LEP students requires an integration of the information obtained at each step. Often the steps overlap at the local level.

Screening Procedures

Initial screening procedures should be used to identify LEP students, to ensure that *all* students who might need services are identified. This process should lead to subsequent testing of students to determine what, if any, services are needed. In many states and local school districts, current identification methods do not include all students who should be considered for language-assistance programs.

Moreover, many states make no distinctions between screening procedures and classification (identification) procedures. Procedures and resources recommended or required by SEAs that provide relevant screening information include: home-language surveys, registration and enrollment information, observations by teachers or tutors, interviews, tests and referrals. For the purpose of these recommendations, a distinction is made between screening procedures and language proficiency or classification assessment, which is covered in the next section.

The prevalent screening device, the home-language survey, usually requires yes/no responses to questions such as, "Is a language other than English spoken at home by the student?" These surveys are usually completed by the student or a parent, but may be completed by school personnel. In some cases, parents provide a negative response—even though English is not spoken at home by the parent or the student. They do this because the student or parents do not fully understand what is being asked by the survey, and why, or because they are afraid of the ramifications of answering honestly. When this happens, students often are excluded from further assessments and, as a consequence, from the language-assistance program.

Currently, 19 states (36 percent) require local school districts to use a home-language survey to screen for students of non-English background; and another 23 states (43 percent) only recommend that school districts use such a survey. Of the 11 states that do not require or recommend the surveys, five states have no screening requirements; procedures are selected by the districts or schools.

States vary in the amount of information collected in the home-language survey. Many state surveys ask what language is used primarily in the home or what language the student first learned. Other state surveys include questions about the language the student uses most frequently with siblings, friends, and other adults at home. One state includes questions about the frequency with which the student uses the native language and the extent to which the student understands the native language. Most states provide samples of the survey in languages other than English in their guidelines for English-as-a-second-language (ESL) or bilingual programs.

Another method used to screen students is a personal interview in English. This interview may occur as a result of the information obtained from the home-language survey or on the recommendation of a teacher or other professional in the school. This informal process can help to determine whether the student speaks a language other than English and will give a preliminary assessment of the degree of English proficiency. Results of this screening method can help determine who should receive additional testing.

There are concerns about the current procedures used to screen students, particularly the use of the home-language survey. Not all states require that students or their parents be asked to complete such a survey. In some instances, students or parents do not sufficiently understand the questions on the survey and thus cannot (or do not) provide accurate answers. In addition, the questions may not identify key information that would lead to additional assessment and probable placement.

It is possible that modifying the survey could not only address the exclusion problem, but ensure that useful information is collected to plan the student's language-development program. This survey, in conjunction with a student interview, would help to ensure that all potentially deserving students are identified for further assessment. The following recommendations concern the use of the home-language survey as the primary screening procedure:

1. SEAs should require all local school districts to conduct a home-language survey of their students.
2. The survey should inquire about the student's place of birth and the first language acquired. In some instances, the student, rather than the parent, might prove to be the most reliable source for information about the first language.
3. Schools should make efforts to ensure that the information obtained in the survey is accurate. The survey should be conducted in the native language, orally if necessary. The purpose of the survey should be clearly stated, and the text should be as simple and straightforward as possible. If

school personnel complete the survey, they should be trained to administer the survey properly and consistently. Follow-up home visits may be necessary to make sure the form is filled out properly. The survey should contain a statement to assure students and parents of their legal rights to education, regardless of their immigration status, and that the results of the survey and subsequent screening/placement procedures will not be reported to immigration officials.

4. The school should conduct the survey quickly and efficiently so that further assessment for placement can proceed within 10 school days of registration.
5. The survey should be standardized both within and across states to ensure that all students who may be eligible for language-assistance programs are identified and receive further assessment.
6. The survey should be the basis for the development of an **initial** home environment profile for the student. The full home environment profile should be developed throughout the process of screening, identification and placement. The full profile should contain information about the affective, linguistic and cognitive needs of the student, as well as other pertinent information. If possible, the profile should include information about the educational background of the student in both the native non-English language and English, including the location of the school(s) previously attended, the language of instruction and the level completed.

Assessment for Classification

Procedures for classifying students who need language-assistance programs should be inclusive; that is, they should identify all students who may not have the necessary skills in any of the four modalities—reading, listening, writing and speaking—needed to succeed in mainstream and all regular classes. Initial assessment should be simple, effective, quick, efficient and comprehensive.

The selection of particular language proficiency assessment instruments, the student score cutoff points used, and any other criteria to determine who is classified as needing language assistance programs is problematic because there are no common criteria used by all states. In some states, the decisions are political, because the selection of students affects the distribution of money. In other states, the decisions are legal, based on equity requirements. Still other states may make decisions based on practical matters, such as the supply of qualified bilingual or ESL teachers. Other states leave the selection of classification criteria up to individual school districts.

Many states do not make the distinction between assessments for LEP classification (or identification) and placement into appropriate classrooms and services. However, for these recommendations, two types of assessment are distinguished:

- Language-proficiency assessment, for classification of language-proficiency status.
- Assessment for placement into appropriate instructional services, involving academic or achievement testing (criterion-referenced or norm-referenced) and other forms of relevant assessment.

The second type of assessment is also especially important for monitoring student progress following academic placement.

Language-proficiency tests are used in 48 states (91 percent) to identify LEP students. Eight states (15 percent) specify that districts must use state-approved tests. The following are the most frequently used language-proficiency tests:

- Language Assessment Scales (38 states)
- IDEA Proficiency Test (25 states)
- Bilingual Syntax Measure (17 states)
- Basic Inventory of Natural Language (15 states)
- Gates-McGintie Language Test (9 states)

Some states (e.g., New Jersey) require an oral native-language assessment for students who do not speak English. Language-proficiency tests all have an English assessment, but they are very limited in the non-English languages they assess. Spanish is the most commonly assessed non-English language.

States reported many procedures or other types of information that are used by school districts to identify and place students. In addition to the home-language survey, language assessment tests and achievement tests, districts use parent recommendations, grades, information assessments, students' comprehensive records, recommendations of school committees or consulting teams and locally developed tests. Some SEAs provide written guides and descriptions of many of these steps; other SEAs allow much flexibility in what procedures and information are used by the districts.

Advisory Committee members raised questions about the suitability of state and local criteria used for selection of specific instruments and the consistency with which state-recommended procedures are applied at the local level. Though some states have criteria for selection of instruments, they often are not theory based and are presented in a laundry-list format with check-offs for whether they are well formulated, are culturally appropriate or have internal reliability or external validity. Moreover, procedures for administering the tests are not uniformly applied across districts.

Problems with accurate assessment also may result from students' differing abilities to take tests. Results may mask the fact that some students lack linguistic and cultural understanding of test procedures.

It is impossible, however, to identify a single set of selection criteria (or a single test) that can meet the needs of all states, school districts and local schools. LEP students in different regions or states vary in the demographic and cultural characteristics that affect their learning of a second language and academic content. With these caveats in mind, we make the following recommendations:

1. Educators should select tests based on sound psychometric practice and theoretically based research, including contemporary theories and research on language proficiency and communicative competence. Educators should select language-proficiency tests and assessments according to explicit criteria. If more than one test or assessment is used, tests should be equated to ensure comparability and/or complementarity (e.g., an oral assessment with a literacy assessment). A norming study may be necessary to ensure comparability.
2. Collectively, tests and assessments should cover all communicative competencies—both receptive (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and writing) skills. They should not be based solely on vocabulary skills. They should include a direct assessment of productive language skills, such as putting words together to reflect thinking and organization in speaking and writing. They also should include criteria that represent the age and grade of the student and the attendant development and increasing complexity of language skills as maturation and language development continue. Most important, language tests and assessments should measure functional competence in relation to the full range of demands of the classroom and the academic language needed to succeed.
3. Schools should not base placement decisions about language-assistance services on a single test score, but on a profile that summarizes results of multiple assessments (tests, clinical assessments, interviews and teacher observations) and attends to the multidimensional aspects of language skills, including reading, writing, listening and speaking.
4. When classification and placement decisions are made using existing language measures that do not address all four language modalities—reading, listening, writing and speaking—or do not meet the standards of validity mentioned in Recommendation 1, then sufficiently stringent cutoff criteria should be used. That is, selection criteria should require a high level of English-language performance for classification as fully English proficient. This will ensure that the tests and assessments used will be safely inclusive of students who need language-assistance services. (The following test batteries appear to most closely match the requirements stated in these recommendations: Language Assessment Battery, Language Assessment Scales, and the Maculaitis Assessment Program.) To the extent possible, supplemental assessment procedures extending beyond these tests should: (a) include direct language measures of communicative and participatory language; (b) compare LEP students' English skills to functional standards for English proficiency in the classroom; and (c) be age and grade appropriate.
5. It is important to assess and develop a profile of the linguistic and general cognitive abilities of non-English-proficient students in their native, non-English languages. Continued development of native language ability greatly facilitates the acquisition of English as a second language.

Assessment for Placement

An important part of the classification/placement process is the assessment of students' academic or achievement levels in age- and grade-relevant content. For preschool through grade one, this kind of assessment is less relevant, but for grades two through twelve, it is essential.

States vary greatly in their requirements and the recommendations they make to school districts in this area. Twenty-five states (47 percent)

require school districts to use one or more methods of assessing students for placement purposes. In other states, local school districts determine methods of assessing students for placement. Some states assess students' achievement in their native, non-English languages. Forty-five states (85 percent) indicated that achievement and criterion-referenced tests are used for identification and placement of LEP students. However, many states have achievement testing traditionally used primarily for program evaluation and general program decisions, not for making decisions about individual students.

Many experts believe that new, more valid procedures are needed for appropriate placement of LEP students. Placement procedures need to accurately assess students' language proficiency *and* curricular knowledge so that schools can provide them with appropriate instruction. Instruction for LEP students should build on their existing linguistic and cognitive skills, rather than providing all students with the same instruction. Instruction should address specific developmental needs and be based on students' strengths—in language (listening, speaking, reading or writing) or content.

The following recommendations address issues related to assessment for placement purposes:

1. Educators should develop tests and assessments in non-English languages to test a student's understanding of content in his or her native language. Students are often inappropriately placed or they are identified as intellectually inferior because their performance on English-language achievement tests or other content tests is reduced by their limited understanding of the language. Without native, non-English language testing or assessment in content areas, it is difficult to determine the extent of content knowledge of children with limited English proficiency. States that have common needs for non-English tests should pool their resources to develop tests.
2. Educators should use achievement test scores and clinical assessments of a student's classroom performance together with other measures (e.g. structured interviews) to give a complete picture of the students' capabilities. Schools should not use achievement test scores as proxy measures for language-proficiency assessment. Rather, educators should examine relationships among achievement test scores, proficiency test scores and other relevant assessments. Procedures and processes should complement and build on one another in a connected fashion.
3. Educators should select both achievement tests and language-proficiency tests that are based on sound psychometric practice and theoretically based research.

Assessment for Monitoring Academic Progress and Reclassification

Tests and assessments used for placement of students into appropriate learning environments also can be used for monitoring students' academic progress, for changing the types of language-assistance services students receive and for reclassification. However, other measures also may be useful. Many states expect districts to assess LEP students regularly as a part of the locally adopted testing programs. In addition, many states have state-mandated tests that all students, or a sample of students, must take as part of an accountability process. These tests are crucial for determining if LEP students are progressing as well as possible and whether program changes may be needed. These tests can help to assess whether LEP students are receiving the same content and quality of instruction as students with English-language backgrounds. Educators should exercise caution in interpreting test results however, because students' performance on such tests, particularly in English, might reflect limited English proficiency and not academic achievement.

Once an LEP student has reached a certain level of proficiency in English and is succeeding at grade level, he or she becomes eligible to participate in English-only classes. The fact that a student reaches preset criterion levels, however, does not ensure that he or she will succeed in regular classes. The student may continue to need language-development assistance (such as tutoring or peer assistance) or additional academic assistance (e.g., through Chapter 1 or special education) to ensure success within the classroom. Schools can use test scores to help determine if the student has the content knowledge and level of English proficiency needed to continue learning in an English-only class.

Most states require or recommend a variety of methods to be used in determining if LEP students should be reclassified. Generally, reclassification means that the student leaves the language-assistance program. However, reclassification should mean changing the *nature* of the language-assistance services received by LEP students, and that services will be continued or restarted if the student needs them.

Nineteen states (36 percent) require that districts use a language-proficiency test, and 16 states (30 percent) recommend the use of this type of test for program exit. Content tests are required by six states (11 percent) and recommended by 18 states (34 percent). Twenty-one states (40 percent) allow the districts to choose the tests used, of which seven states (13 percent) specify what cutoff points to use. Thirteen states (25 percent) require districts to use state-approved tests, and ten of these states (19 percent) specify the cutoff points.

States also recommend or require the use of methods such as observation, interviews, parent consent and committee decisions. Seventeen states (32 percent) have no requirements or criteria for determining when LEP student leave language-assistance programs.

Political and practical issues often limit the assessment of students for reclassification or program exit. Politically, some districts are reluctant to reclassify LEP students because it would mean a loss of funding. On the other hand, some language-assistance programs are structured to provide instruction to students for only a certain number of years, after which students are automatically placed into English-only classes. Very often the English-only classroom has no mechanism for helping former LEP students continue their language development in either the native, non-English language or English.

The following recommendations address issues associated with assessment for the purposes of monitoring student success and reclassification:

1. Testing for monitoring purposes should include measures of English and non-English language proficiency and curricular achievement. Schools should give these tests at least on an annual basis. Schools should compare LEP students' achievement to that of academically successful students from English-speaking backgrounds, as well as mainstreamed language-minority students. Educators should use the results of the tests to revise the student's academic program or change the types of language-assistance services he or she is receiving.
2. Achievement testing for LEP students, as for all students, should reflect ambitious and high-level goals, use state-of-the-art testing methods that reflect the goals of schooling and be accompanied by viable programs for instructional improvement.
3. Achievement testing in the student's native language is needed to accurately and comprehensively look at students' academic progress if instruction is occurring in the native, non-English language. Educators should be cautious, however, in interpreting achievement test performance in the native language because students vary in their familiarization with the first language as it is used on tests.
4. Two types of achievement testing should take place. Valid standardized tests are needed to assess how LEP students are doing compared with FEP students. In addition, educators should use observations and other forms of assessment in the classroom to determine how students are doing on a daily basis.
5. The determination that students no longer need certain types of language assistance services must be based on two types of proficiencies: language proficiency (in all four modalities) and academic proficiency. If language-minority students are to be considered sufficiently proficient in English to benefit from English-only instruction, they must meet an absolute standard, indicating that they have skills comparable to native English speakers. With regard to academic proficiency, language-minority students must be compared with their non-language-minority peers in knowledge of subject matter. Educators must assess the student's foundation for the acquisition of new information, as well as his or her ability to participate successfully in English-only classes. The exit process should require (a) multiple criteria (such as tests, portfolios and writing samples), (b) performance of the student at grade level and (c) a level of achievement comparable with that of FEP students.
6. Services for LEP students should represent a continuum of appropriate programs, not be dichotomous (i.e., provided or *not*, based on entry or exit requirements). Once a student enters a mainstream English-only class, he or she may need support beyond the normal classroom support, such as tutoring. An important component of language-assistance programs should be that students can be reclassified, yet continue receiving language-development

services, if needed, in the mainstream classroom. In addition, a student can begin receiving language-assistance services at a later time, if needed. This concept requires the collaboration and coordination of all relevant programs (e.g., Title VII and Chapter 1 programs).

7. In deciding whether to reclassify a student educators should consider the extent of services available after the student has entered mainstream English-only classes. Schools should provide appropriate instructional services to enable the reclassified student to succeed academically.
8. Assessment procedures for monitoring student success after reclassification should reflect the characteristics used in identification procedures: validity, multimodality and school-related language proficiencies. Decisions to have students participate fully in regular classrooms without special services should not be based on inappropriately low criteria. "Trigger" procedures for service changes and program exits should be based on defensibly sound, multiple and empirically-based criteria, not simply determined by one teacher's recommendations, a single test score or the length of time in the program. After reclassification, students should be monitored for continuing success.

Information about LEP students is needed at many levels: federal, state, district, program, classroom and individual. Educators at all levels use this information to monitor and evaluate programs, as well as to make decisions concerning the educational placement of individual children and the assistance provided to them. The information comes from student records maintained at the school or district or from summary documentation compiled by the school, district or state. The ease with which educators can obtain information depends on the way that the data are maintained. If specific information is maintained solely within individual student paper files, then compilation of data about the program is time consuming; and it is difficult to cross-tabulate key pieces of information about program services and their success. If the data are maintained in a computerized student record system, educators can more easily access and analyze the data to provide answers to key policy and evaluation questions. Hence, the data system (or lack thereof) can have a major impact on the provision of appropriate language-assistance services to LEP children.

Currently, states collect a limited amount of information about LEP students while they are in language-assistance programs. Thirty-four states (64 percent) request information about the number of LEP students referred to special education; 31 states (59 percent) request information about the number of LEP students who dropped out of school; and 29 states (55 percent) request information about the number of LEP students retained in grade. Fewer states ask for data to be reported on the number of LEP students participating in the migrant program, graduating, placed at or below grade level, placed in gifted/talented programs, or exiting school. Only eight states (15.1 percent) monitor the absenteeism or attendance rates of LEP students. Fewer than five states indicated they requested monitoring data in any of the categories about LEP students after they exit the program.

To evaluate the success of students in obtaining an effective and appropriate education, educators need a comprehensive data base on LEP students and comparable data for LEP students and FEP students. The ideal, most efficient way to maintain the data is in a computerized data base containing student records. A student record is created when the student enters the school district, and the record is maintained for that student until he or she graduates or transfers from the system.

The data base should be maintained at the lowest level needed. That is, identifiable information may be maintained at the school or school district depending on the setup of the system. Summary information can be compiled from this data base; or individual records, stripped of identifiable data, can be transmitted to the district or state to do further analyses.

BENEFIT OF A COMPREHENSIVE DATA BASE

The benefits of a student record system are many, particularly to those monitoring the success of LEP children. For program evaluation and monitoring, educators can use the system to demonstrate the consequences of different educational programs or services. Test scores of groups of children served in different programs can be compared, as well as eventual success in mainstream

English-only classes. The system could provide data that would help with planning for inservice needs or other district needs.

For monitoring individual student success, the system can track student grades and achievement test results to identify students needing additional help, as well as those succeeding. Among the questions that could be answered with these data are:

- How many students use a language other than English at home?
- How many students were identified as needing language-assistance services?
- How many children were served by different types of services?
- How well are students who receive language-assistance services achieving?
- How many students who have been identified at some time as LEP graduate from high school, drop out, or attend postsecondary schools?

Many school districts and some states now have student record systems that maintain many types of information about all students. A network for the electronic transmission of student records is already available in Florida, and a nationwide system is under development. One of the major benefits of such a network for LEP students is the capacity of a sending school district to quickly transmit a standard student record to a receiving district, so that the appropriate placement of the student can be facilitated. What is proposed is similar to the Migrant Student Records Transfer System, but better, because the data format for the student record is standardized and the information contained in the record will be more easily interpreted and incorporated into an existing data base. The standardization of all student records would be beneficial in the reporting of data to the SEA and the U.S. Department of Education, because the data would be consistent from site to site and state to state.

Educators need other data that can be used to evaluate the success of language-assistance programs. For instance, it would be useful to get more detailed information to answer questions about the curriculum and other aspects of language-assistance programs and compare the expectations in these programs and regular education programs. The following questions address issues of quality instruction; these issues are crucial to the provision of appropriate services to LEP students.

- Are language-assistance programs taught by certified teachers?
- Are teachers or paraprofessionals providing the services to LEP students?
- How much time is spent in English-language and native language instruction?
- Are LEP students getting as much content instruction as FEP students?
- What materials are available for language-assistance programs?

Questions such as these can be addressed in several different ways. Samples of teachers can be observed or interviewed to obtain relevant information for evaluating language-assistance programs. Other questions may be answerable through personnel record systems.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were developed to address needs for useful and timely data about LEP students.

1. School districts should maintain the following types of information about any students identified as limited English proficient (LEP) as part of their individual student profiles:
   - background information (e.g., race/ethnicity, sex, date of birth, place of birth, native language, information about the parents and migrant status);
   - assessment information (e.g., tests taken, scores and dates); and
   - academic information (e.g., courses taken, grades, attendance and promotion/retention).

   For students participating in special programs such as language-assistance and special education programs, there should be information about:
   - types of services received,
   - dates of placement and withdrawal, and
   - criteria used for placement.
2. SEAs and school districts should collect and maintain other data for program monitoring. Program evaluation information may be obtained from administrative records (such as certification and personnel files) or through data-collection efforts (such as surveys, observation studies or interviews). Quality of instructional programs for LEP students can be assessed using data on:
   - training and certification of bilingual/ESL teachers,
   - amount of time spent in content and English-language instruction, and
   - materials and other resources available in programs.

   Educators should obtain summary information concerning levels of student participation and student success from the individual student record data base. Schools and districts should compare LEP students' success with the success of regular education students.

MODEL FOR ASSESSMENT AND SERVICE DELIVERY TO STUDENTS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

any states have conceptualized the process needed to ensure that all students with limited English proficiency in grades K-12 are identified. Educators need a model however, showing that assessment is ongoing and that students who have left language-assistance programs, but are having trouble, can begin receiving services again as needed. The following model, presented in Figure 1, illustrates the process described in the previous sections.

To summarize, screening is the first phase in the identification of language-minority students. Schools should assess these students in four language modalities—reading, listening, writing and speaking—in both the non-English language and English to determine if they lack the English-language skills needed to succeed in English-only classes without the benefit of language-assistance services. If students are identified as being limited English proficient, they should be further assessed concerning their content knowledge in order for proper placement in services to occur. Some students may be behind their peers in content knowledge and may need additional services to help them achieve at the expected age and grade level. This assessment should be done in the native, non-English language because testing in English could confound the student's actual knowledge with the student's ability to understand English. After students are placed into language-assistance programs, they should be continually assessed (at least annually) for their language proficiencies and their acquisition of content knowledge. Educators should use information from these assessments to make decisions about continuing the students in language-assistance programs, changing the types of services the students receive, or reclassifying the student as

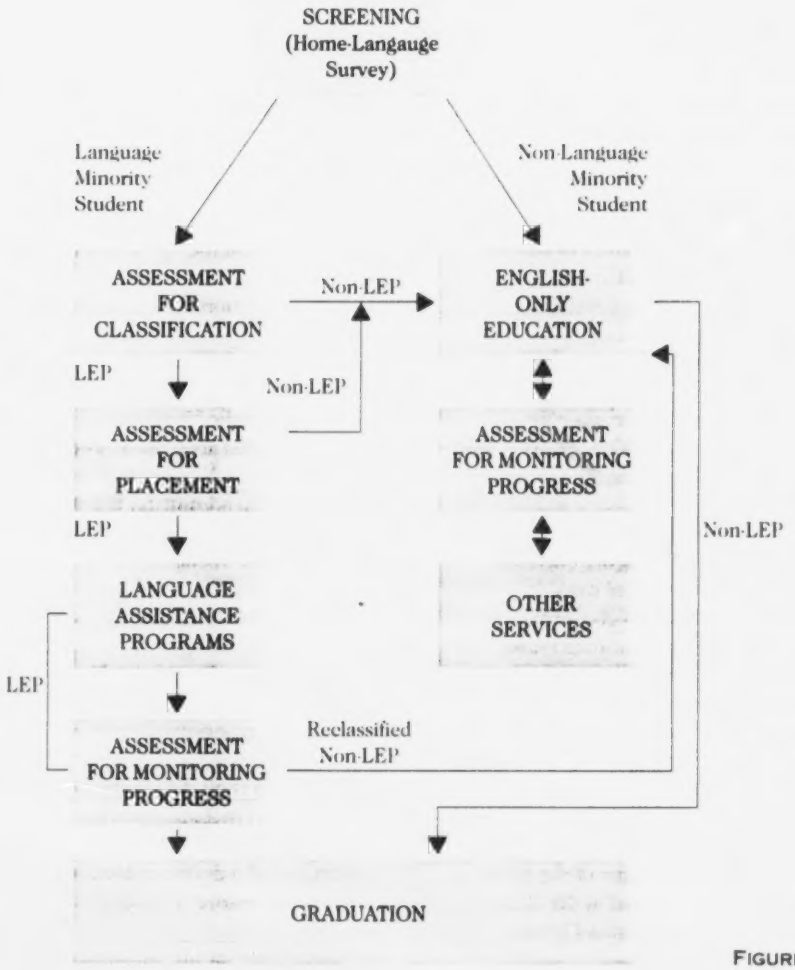

FIGURE 1

FEP or as capable of functioning successfully in English-only classes. Once students are placed to English-only classes, educators should regularly monitor them for continuing development of English-language skills and increasing levels of content knowledge and successful participation in an English-only classroom. If students are not succeeding, they should be provided with other related services. Because a major goal of schooling is to have all students graduate from high school, educators should monitor the success of all students who have ever been identified as LEP. Such monitoring should assess how well such students meet school requirements (completion of courses required for graduation and appropriate grade point average), as well as their continuing attendance in school. Through continual monitoring, educators can ensure that students are appropriately identified for all other special services that might be available, such as gifted/talented programs, special education and compensatory education.

Policy Implications at the Federal and State Levels

The preceding recommendations have implications for the organization and delivery of instruction to LEP students at the federal, state and local levels. Policy decisions made at the federal and state levels are required to ensure the implementation of the principles and practices recommended here.

The federal government should:

- Work with SEAs to provide leadership and support in developing a set of screening instruments and procedures to be used across states and within districts. The instruments should include the items recommended by the CCSSO Advisory Committee (explained previously in section 1, "Screening").
- Support equating and norming studies of all tests that are currently recommended for local use.
- Collect school-level counts of LEP students on the annual Public Elementary-Secondary School Universe Survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics. These counts should include *all* students identified as limited English proficient, not just those served by Title VII programs. Moreover, these counts will provide an estimate of the distribution of LEP students at the elementary and secondary school levels.

SEAs should:

- Convene interagency teams to review the recommendations put forth by the CCSSO Advisory Committee and to develop implementation strategies.
- Require all local districts to administer a uniform home-language survey to all students.
- Require that the home-language survey be conducted within 10 school days of registration and in the student's native language if possible.
- Encourage local districts to develop mechanisms to ensure that the information on the home-language survey is completed accurately. These efforts may include training of local personnel, who administer the survey at the school site, and conducting follow-up home visits.
- Urge local education agencies (LEAs) to select tests and assessment methods that are consistent with the principles outlined here. This will help ensure that students are consistently and appropriately identified and placed.
- Augment their data-collection systems to (a) include elements recommended under the "data-collection" section, and (b) devise collection formats that ensure comparability of data.
- Make appropriate adjustments in the state rules and regulations that provide guidance regarding the provision of services to LEP students.
- Pool their resources and collaborate with states having similar needs for the development of: (a) appropriate measures of English-language proficiency; (b) appropriate measures of proficiency in the native, non-English languages; and (c) assessments of content knowledge in the native, non-English languages.

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APPENDIX A
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